

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL/HYBRID
ARLINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

01/22/2026

The **FORESTRY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION** convened its meeting at **7:00 PM** on **01/22/2026**.

PRESENT (IN-PERSON) Caroline Haynes, Bill Browning, Jenn Hazen, John Carey, Bob Benson, Connor Goolsby, David Howell, Alex Sanders, Steven Sockwell, Noreen Hannigan, Neal Hunter, Josh Handler, Lisa Marcellus

PRESENT (VIRTUALLY) Nia Bagley

ABSENT Elizabeth Gearin, Phil Klingelhofer

STAFF Vincent Verweij (DPR), Jennifer Fioretti (CPO), Leslie Fillmore (Agricultural Extension), Anh Phan (NOVA Parks), Steven Bernheisel (APS)

MOTIONS & ACTIONS/VOTES

Guests, Commissioners and Staff – Introductions and Sign-in

Caroline Haynes spoke about the new Board Liaison, Susan Cunningham, upcoming budget, legislation.

Public comments

Climate Policy Office Update – Jennifer Fioretti

Jennifer Fioretti introduced the Climate Policy Office, and presented on the office's progress.

Questions and discussion followed on:

- What to do to convert more homes to heat pumps and whether businesses were interested in improving permitting.
- A solar coop model for heat pumps
- Finding HVAC companies for heat pumps
- Integrating climate goals into other commissions' charters and government departments
- Mitigating climate impacts through trees and other green spaces and the priority of these solutions in the climate action plan.
- Inclusion of carbon embodied and captured in trees and other natural features.
- Communications on climate action related to conserving existing trees and other natural features
- Outreach to Dominion Energy and their role in things like net metering and other carbon-positive programs

2026 Work Plan – Caroline Haynes

The previously-discussed 2026 work plan was put up for a vote.

The motion was made by David Howell, seconded by Steven Sockwell to adopt the work plan was , and it was approved unanimously.

Charter update – Caroline Haynes

Caroline Haynes spoke about the charter update.

Edits were discussed on:

1. Considering alternatives to “promotional”
2. Ensuring it’s clear what “natural resources” are in the commission’s view
3. Acquisition of natural properties

The Charter will be discussed with the Board Liaison, and then brought to the Commission for a vote.

Future of Notable Tree Program

Caroline Haynes and Vincent Verweij presented the notable tree program as it stands now. The volunteer who inventoried trees for this program, John Wingard, is stepping down from the responsibility, and while a new volunteer has been identified, the program can be reconsidered.

Discussion followed on:

1. Revitalizing the outreach and promotion for this program
2. Invasive tree exclusion
3. Notable trees on public property
4. Adding the notable tree program to the County front page, along with other featured programs

A resolution to thank John Wingard for his work was proposed. Josh Handler motioned with Steve Sockwell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Leckey Gardens Letter

Bob Benson discussed the project with added input from Jenn Hazen. Discussion followed on:

1. Burying electric wires to allow for plantable space.
2. Ensuring enough space is available for tree conservation
3. Underscoring that this is the first major project in the corridor
4. Providing the right space for the people going into the affordable housing proposed

David Howell motioned to adopt the letter and Steve Sockwell seconded. The letter was approved unanimously.

December minutes and Staff Reports

Minutes were approved unanimously, with John Carey and Bob Benson abstaining.

Vincent Verweij spoke about staff changes, mulch, ANC tree slices, preventive maintenance in Quincy Park, Deer management, and Oobius wasp surveys.

Forestry:

Maintenance:

- Circuit tree maintenance: Tree crews are working in Radnor/Ft. Myer Heights. Dominion Hills is completed. The first few batches of Bluemont were issued. Ballston is being inventoried.
- Pilot preventive park maintenance: Staff are inventorying mature trees for maintenance in Quincy Park to understand what parameters may be appropriate for preventive maintenance in parks.
- Staff are preparing for the snow storm, which may come with tree work, as well.
- County contractors are assisting in reducing open requests. At the time of this report, there are 142 reports open, down from 300 in December.
- Contractors are spreading mulch on root zones of mature trees in Barcroft, Virginia Highlands, Thomas Jefferson Park,

Planning:

Long-term planning

- Staff continue to assist on the Low Residential Study. A contractor is assisting with an i-Tree Hydro project, which will analyze potential changes in tree canopy, and the effect on stormwater.
- Forestry staff created and reviewed a draft guide for what to do with lifted sidewalks near trees.
- Staff met with FNRC commissioners and APS to discuss potential collaboration on tree planting and natural areas on APS property.

Special Exception projects (site plans, use permits)

- In review:
 - Site plan at 1401 Wilson Boulevard. Major open comments remain, including the plaza canopy coverage not being met and insufficient street trees provided along N. Nash.
 - Leckey Gardens (SPLN25-00007). Most comments remain open; the street tree plan has not been improved, and the preservation measures for the large tree have not been updated to properly protect it.
 - Alexan project – 2000 15th St. N. (SPLA25-00025). The largest issue is the applicant meeting the 25% canopy coverage requirement and increasing the number of large canopy trees along this pedestrian connection.
 - Walgreens site (3130 Langston Blvd). The outstanding issues discussion focused on the street trees along Langston Blvd and the possible stormwater issues on the east side of the building. This project is having some last-minute challenges meeting their canopy goals, and will need to make adjustments.

DES

- Staff inspected valve location for a watermain near on Williamsburg Blvd and determine potential tree impact
- Inspecting tree protection fence on Walter Reed Dr and making sure it was installed correctly

- Staff are working with DES to consider reusing wood on the Gulf Branch stream restoration project.
- Staff reviewed the ANCC Trail Connector project. Most comments were resolved; however, Transportation must finalize the APS tree replacement location and provide an agreement confirming the total quantities.

Parks

- Preconstruction meetings were held for the Alcova Heights and Rock Spring Pedestrian Bridges. Both projects will remove some trees; however, they will be replaced with new trees at the end of each project.
- Staff joined a virtual meeting for the Upper Bluemont Park Tennis Courts Renovation. Tree preservation, landscaping, and soil profile requirements were discussed with the contractor.
- Staff recovered tree slices from Oak Grove park, which were removed by Landscape staff. These slices were originally from trees on Arlington National Cemetery, and were given to Arlington County as part of the Millennium expansion. Forestry will work with planning and park management staff to find a new location for these, and install a plaque to more clearly explain their history.

Federal

- The Long Bridge railroad project is underway, and has removed several large trees along the Mt. Vernon Trail. Replanting will be part of the project in Arlington and Washington, DC.

Tree Planting:

- With the tree planting coordinator position vacant, our Management intern Chloe Kienzle has been assisting with marking and coordination of planting of Fall planting and the stormwater fund tree planting.
- Staff are considering a plan to create the first food forest in Arlington.
- Staff met with the outreach team to discuss door hangers for opt-in and opt-out versions for tree planting in front of homes.

Other:

- Aftab Hussain retired after 27 years of service with Arlington County. His position will be frozen until July.

Natural Resources:

Deer management will continue throughout February. Goals are to have the contracted sharpshooter manage 90 deer overall.

Invasives: Currently there is no herbicide work, due to the weather. Most recently, contractors completed cutting and treating woody invasives in Windy Run and Bon Air parks. More Tree-of-Heaven was treated and will be assessed and, if necessary, scheduled for removal in the spring. A donation in Trust & Agency was used for work at two smaller parks - Ten-Barton and Cherrydale. With other funds, bamboo was removed from county land adjacent to Madison Manor park, and at Thrifton Hills.

Virginia Tech researched whether Oobius wasps were found in traps set in parks, to understand whether they established in our environment to manage Emerald Ash Borer. None have been identified so far. NR staff will organize volunteers to sort the other half of the samples. Next summer we will collect samples again, and the following year will be a release year.

Commission Member Reports (Taken in order of Action Items first)

Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Park and Recreation Commission (Alex Sanders)

The PRC met on Tuesday, January 20. We welcomed two new members to the commission and discussed recruitment needs- three commissioners will be going off the commission over the next few months.

No presentations. Instead, we went through staff and commissioner reports, updating everyone on the status of the many initiatives and projects that PRC is involved in or monitoring.

Chair Barker distributed a short summary of matters that commissioners should be monitoring and asking about during SPRC meetings. We discussed that and how best to advocate during SPRC meetings.

Public Spaces Master Plan Implementation Advisory Group (Caroline Haynes)

No report

Parks Review Subcommittee (David Howell)

No report

Planning Activities/SPRC

Comprehensive Plan Review: David Howell/Caroline Haynes

No action available to the public has happened on the Comprehensive Plan update since our December meeting, including announcements about the next advisory group meeting or the availability of new documents.

Low Residential Housing Study: Caroline Haynes/David Howell

Walgreens/Lyon Village: Bob Benson/David Howell

This project is the proposed construction of a 10-story, 300-unit residential building at the site of a former Walgreens pharmacy on Langston Boulevard at Kirkwood Street in Lyon Village. I have represented FNRC at two Site Plan Review Committee meetings, the most recent on December 18th. There are four civic associations actively involved in site plan review, all of which have expressed concerns about building size, parking and traffic flow, pedestrian safety, stormwater management, and trees and green spaces, among other issues. This project will likely come before the Planning Commission in March, so we will discuss a draft letter at our February meeting. If you would like to see my talking points made at the SPRC meetings, send me an email.

Inn of Rosslyn: Caroline Haynes

Leckey Gardens: Bob Benson/Jenn Hazen

Waverly Gardens: Bill Browning/David Howell

Bill Browning spoke about Waverly Gardens and the next SPRC meetings. In an email, he shared "I'm our representative to the SPRC for Waverly Ridge. Here's the [site plan](#)."

I've attended a walking meeting to tour the site and one SPRC meeting so far.

I'm not sure what (if any) letter I want to encourage the FNRC to send, but I personally feel there are too many townhomes in too small of an area. I feel the developer could build a taller building, preserve more green space, and sell apartments rather than townhomes. But I'm not the financier here. The developer (BNC) says this property has failed with a couple different previous and unsuccessful proposals and BCN's proposal is the most feasible plan.

Transportation Plan Advisory Group (John Carey)

No report

Public Facilities Review Commission (Vacant)

No report

Tree Stewards (Noreen Hannigan)

Tree Stewards of Arlington and Alexandria has held some habitat-restoration events in spite of the cold weather this month. Work removing invasive plants and rescuing trees from damaging vines has taken place at Fort Scott and Dominion Hills and, before the month is out, will take place at Lacey Woods, where volunteers will spread mulch around a national co-champion Virginia pine at the request of Urban Forestry. (Anyone is welcome to participate.)

Tree Stewards responded to requests from homeowners to advise them on native tree & shrub selection as they considered applying for the Spring 2026 Tree Canopy / Tree Equity Program. Of those 11 home visits, 9 resulted in applications for being submitted. The application period closed Jan. 14.

Lastly, Sue Kim (of the Natural Resources Division) sent these end-of-year stats to Tree Stewards (and ARMN Park Stewards) when she thanked us for our volunteer efforts:

"Your work greatly expands the capacity of our work group and in 2025 allowed us to:

"-Grow almost 11,000 plants in the nursery, including 550 trees.

"-Support restoration projects in over twenty different county parks.

"-Plant 329 trees with deer protection and over 6,000 herbaceous plants. "

Tree Canopy Fund (Noreen Hannigan)

The application period for Arlington residents to apply for free native trees and shrubs closed on January 14. Next a panel (made up of EcoAction and Urban Forestry staff plus 2 FNRC Commissioners), will meet to review the applications. Once a final count of tree species is compiled, a group of Tree Stewards will visit the native tree nursery in Luray, VA, to select the healthiest trees and shrubs. Davey Trees is the contractor who will be doing the planting in spring. Tree Stewards provided assistance in the form of home visits to advise homeowners (and managers of other private property sites) who requested a visit on selection and planting placement. (Too early to know how many trees and shrubs will be planted. Will know after reviews are completed.)

Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (Bill Browning and Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable (Vincent Verweij)

No report

Arlington Neighborhoods Advisory Committee (Phil Klingelhofer)

No report

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (Lisa Marcellus)

C2E2 put together their action plan. Lisa Marcellus spoke about the climate and food event on February 25.

Virginia Department of Forestry (Jacob Zielinski)

No report

Arlington Public Schools (Steven Bernheisel)

APS met with FNRC commissioners to talk about the collaboration between DPR and APS.

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Leslie Filmore)

New business

Bob Benson is working on legislation on tree canopy and is working with APS and DPR on collaboration with APS to improve canopy on APS properties.

Josh Handler asked about the town halls scheduled by the County Board.

Meeting adjourned at **9:00**.